

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2801

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0268

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, OVIP

SUBJECT: PROPOSED VISIT BY SECRETARY VANCE TO LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 0251

1. SUMMARY. GOL HAS UNDERTAKEN WHAT AMOUNTS TO PUBLIC APPEAL TO USG TO INCLUDE LEBANON ON ITINERARY OF EXPECTED MIDDLE EAST TOUR OF SECRETARY VANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. LEADING BEIRUT FRENCH DAILY L'ORIENT-LE JOUR CARRIED FRONT-PAGE CENTER LEAD STORY JAN 22 SIGNALLING PUBLICLY THE INTENSE GOL INTEREST IN A VISIT TO LEBANON BY THE SECRETARY DURING HIS REPORTED UPCOMING MIDDLE EAST TOUR. ARTICLE, BASED ON MEETING BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND FONMIN BOUTROS JAN 21, NOTED EXPECTED TOUR BY SECRETARY "...OF SEVERAL MIDDLE EAST CAPITALS -- NOT INCLUDING BEIRUT...MR. BOUTROS INDICATED YESTERDAY THAT CONTACTS WERE UNDER WAY WITH WASHINGTON ON THIS QUESTION."

3. ARTICLE SAYS FONMIN LEARNED OF SECRETARY'S EXPECTED TOUR THROUGH INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCIES. BOUTROS IS QUOTED AS SAYING "WE IMMEDIATELY...UNDERTOOK THE

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CONTACTS INDICATED BY THE HIGHER INTERESTS OF LEBANON AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALL THAT IS HAPPENING AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS." JOURNALISTS RECALLED "THE PROMISE MADE DURING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN BY MR. JIMMY CARTER TO SEND A SPECIAL ENVOY TO LEBANON." BOUTROS RESPONDED THAT, AT THAT TIME, LEBANON'S INTERNAL SITUATION WAS "VERY DELICATE,"

ADDING THAT HE DID NOT KNOW IF IT WAS A PROJECT TO CONTRIBUTE TO A RETURN TO PEACE (IN LEBANON) OR TO SIMPLY GATHER INFORMATION, BUT THOUGHT THE LATTER INTERPRETATION APPLIED. BOUTROS CONCLUDED, "I SUPPOSE THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WILL FOLLOW UP, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ON HIS PROMISE." (THE REST OF THE ARTICLE DEALT WITH THE VISIT OF UN SEC GEN WALDHEIM, EXPECTED ON FEB 7.)

4. COMMENT: THE BEIRUT PRESS IS NOW HEAVILY CENSORED. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT BOUTROS KNEW THAT HIS COMMENTS WOULD RECEIVE PROMINENT COVERAGE AND DELIBERATELY DECIDED TO "GO PUBLIC" TO UNDERLINE THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE THE GOL ATTACHES TO A VISIT TO LEBANON BY THE SECRETARY, IF THE HERALDED MIDDLE EAST TOUR IN FACT TAKES PLACE. AS INDICATED REFTTEL, THIS EMBASSY STRONGLY URGES THAT LEBANON BE INCLUDED ON THE SECRETARY'S ITINERARY. THE PRSTIGE OF THE SARKIS REGIME HAS BEEN FALLING IN RECENT WEEKS AND THERE HAS BEEN MORE AND MORE TALK OF PARTITION IN CHRISTIAN CIRCLES. A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY WOULD HELP TO REINFORCE SARKIS' POSITION AS THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY IN LEBANON AND PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE OUR SUPPORT OF LEBANON'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NATIONAL UNITY.
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